Miggles

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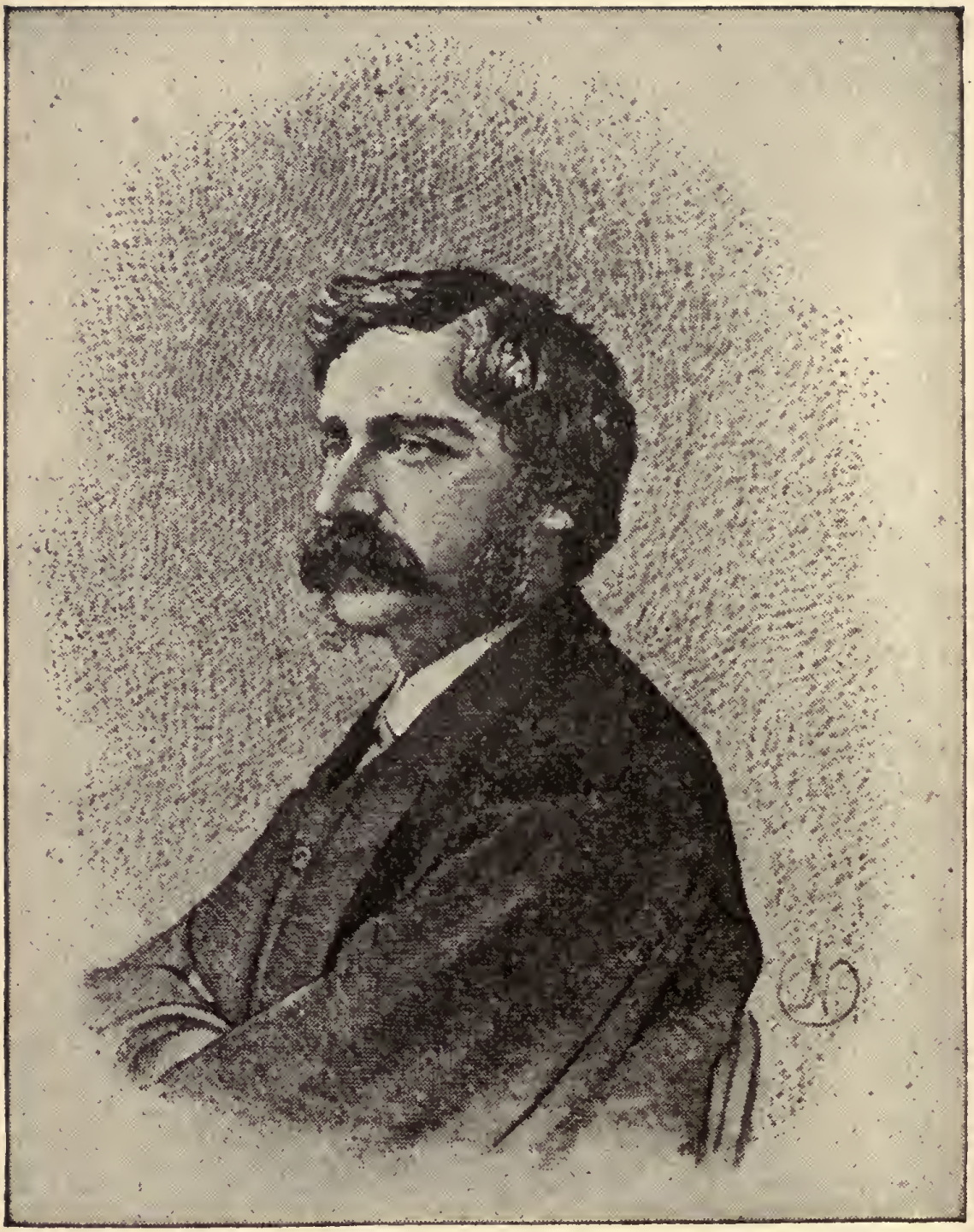
Miggles and Other Stories



BRET HARTE

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and Other Stories

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The Gold Medal Library

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BRET HARTE

SOME years ago, Thomas Starr King, then unknowingly near the end of his short but noble and glowing life, was guiding an acquaintance through the dingy, gold-strewn recesses of the Government Mint building in San Francisco. Pausing before entering the Secretary's little office, he said: "Now I want you to meet a young man who will be heard of far and wide some of these days." The visitor went in and was introduced to Francis Bret Harte, then Secretary of the Branch Mint. We all know how the later career of the young writer has more than justified the affectionate dedication of Starr King; for, since that day, Bret Harte's fame has, to borrow the language of his admiring German translator, "extended from the coasts of the Pacific Ocean to the English coast of the North Sea." "His works have drawn hearts to him wherever the language of Shakespeare, of Milton, and Byron is spoken."

A man who has so many readers must needs inspire a kindly curiosity to know

something of the antecedents in a life which has given us such noble works. Mr. Harte was born at Albany, New York, in 1839. He was christened Francis Bret Harte; but the second name,—an old family one,—was that by which he was familiarly known among home friends and acquaintances. Later in life, the initial of his Christian name was dropped altogether, and the world learned to know and love him by the somewhat crisp title of "Bret Harte."

Young Harte grew up surrounded by refining influences; his father was a teacher of girls, and a ripe and cultured student withal. Left fatherless, Harte wandered off to California in 1854, dazzled with the golden visions which then transfigured that distant land; and, won by the fantastic romance which stories of the early Spanish occupation, sudden wealth, surprising adventure, and novel life and scenery invested the country, he cast himself into the changeful stream of humanity which ebbed and flowed among the young cities by the sea, the pine-clad ridges of the Sierra, and the

rude camps of the gold-hunters which were then breaking the stillness of long unvexed solitudes. No age nor condition, no quality of manhood, nor grade of moral or mental culture was unrepresented in that motley tide of migration. The dreamy young student, the future poet of the Argonauts of 1849, drifted on with the rest.

For two or three years he, like all the restless wanderers of those days, pursued a various calling and had no fixed abode. An unsatisfied desire for change, a half-confessed impatience with long tarrying in any spot, seemed to possess every soul. Mining camps and even thrifty towns were depopulated in a single day, the unnoted casualties of their rough life emptying a few places, the rest being eagerly left behind by men who drifted far and wide; their lately coveted "claims" were quickly occupied by other rovers from other fields. Harte mined a little, taught school a little, tried his hand at type-setting and frontier journalism, climbed mountains and threaded ravines as the mounted messenger of an express com-

pany, or acted as agent for that company in some of the mountain towns which we have learned to know so well as Sandy Bar, Poker Flat and Wingdam. But all the while the lithe, agile, and alert young artist was absorbing impressions of the picturesque life, scenery, manners, and talk which surrounded him as an atmosphere.

In 1857, or thereabouts, he drifted back to San Francisco—"The Bay," as the pleasant city by the sea was fondly called by the wandering sons of adventure. The Bay was the little heaven where cool sea-winds, good cheer, and glimpses of that sensuous life which was then thought of as a far-off, faintly remembered good found only in "the States." Here Harte speedily developed into a clever young *litterateur*. Working in the composing-room of a weekly literary journal, he put into type some of his own graceful little sketches by way of experiment. These were noticed and appreciated by the editor, and he was translated from "the case" to the editorial room of *The Golden Era*, where some of the pleasant papers

which find place in his later published works were written. These were chiefly local sketches, like "A Boy's Dog," "Sidewalking" and "From a Balcony." Meantime, marriage and the cares of a growing household had changed the vagrant fancy of the young writer, and he roved no more. He wrote a great deal which has not been gathered up, and in the columns of daily papers, as well as in *The Californian,* a literary weekly which he some time edited, appeared innumerable papers which enriched the current literature of those times, and swelled the volume of that higher quality of California journalism which seems now to have passed quite away.

In 1864 he was appointed Secretary of the United States Branch Mint in San Francisco, a position which, during the six years he held it, gave him time and opportunity for more careful work than any which he had heretofore accomplished. During this time some of the most famous of his poems and sketches were written. "John Burns of Gettysburg," "The Pliocene Skull," "The So-

ciety Upon the Stainislow," "How Are You, Sanitary?" and other little unique gems of verse were written and first appeared (for the most part) anonymously in the San Francisco newspapers. In July, 1868, the publication of *The Overland Monthly* was begun, with Bret Harte as its organizer and editor. The success of the magazine was immediate and decided. We cannot tell how much of its renown was owing to the series of remarkable stories which immediately began to flow from the pen of its accomplished editor, nor how much of the rare talent which he seems to have had in awakening the dormant energies of those who constituted his loyal staff of contributors. *The Overland* became at once a unique, piquant and highly-desired element in the current literature of the Republic; and it found a multitude of readers on both sides of the Atlantic. In its pages, August, 1868, appeared "The Luck of Roaring Camp," a story which, whatever may be the merits of those which succeeded it, gave Harte the first of his great fame as a prose-

writer. But it was not until January of the next year that the stimulated appetite of the impatient public was appeased by the production of "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," a dramatic tale which probably contains more firmly-drawn and distinct characters than have appeared in any one of Harte's stories or sketches. "Miggles" came next, and, marshaled in their long array, the inimitable personages who figure in still later stories emerged from their shadowy realm and passed into the language and familiar acquaintance of the English speaking world. Col. Starbottle, John Oakhurst, Stumpy, Tennessee's Partner and Miggles—with laughter and with tears we remember them all; we shall know them as long as we know Sam Weller, Micawber, Little Nell and the goodly company called into being by that other magician who has, at last, laid down his wand forever.

Harte's poems are more thickly scattered through his later work in California than elsewhere. Some of the best known were written between 1865 and

1870; "Plain Language From Truthful James," popularly quoted as the "Heathen Chinee," appeared in *The Overland* of September, 1870. A more ambitious work, "The Lost Galleon," was an earlier production, and gave title to a thin volume of fugitive bits of verse published in San Francisco a year or two before. Harte's first book was the *Condensed Novels*, a collection of wonderful imitations, too real to be called parodies, first printed in *The Californian*, published in a poorly executed volume in New York, called in and republished and reinforced in 1871.

In the Spring of 1871, Harte, resigning the editorial position which he held, as well as the Professorship of Recent Literature in the University of California, to which he nad lately been called, returned to his native State with the ripened powers and generous fame which he had gathered during his seventeen years of absence.

What Harte's repute and standing are in his own land need not now be told. Few writers of modern times have been

more discussed; it were better if his critics had always been generous as well as just. But it would not be fair to close this little sketch without noting the fact that most of his works have found eager readers in other lands. English editions of his stories are popular and widely circulated. In Germany, the genial old poet, Ferdinand Freiligrath, has translated a volume of Harte's prose tales, to which is prefixed a charming preface by the translator. We cannot forbear making this extract, so full of the simple-hearted Freiligrath's goodness:

"Nevertheless, he remains what he is—the Californian and the gold-digger. But the gold for which he has dug, and which he found, is not the gold in the bed of rivers,—not the gold in the veins of mountains; it is the gold of love, of goodness, of fidelity, of humanity, which even in rude and wild hearts,—even under the rubbish of vices and sins,—remains forever uneradicated from the human heart. That he there searched for this gold,—that he found it there and triumphantly exhibited it to the world,—

that is his greatness and his merit. That it is which drew hearts to him wherever the language of Shakespeare, of Milton and Byron is spoken. And that it is which has made me, the old German poet, the translator of the young American colleague; and which has led me to-day to reach to him across the sea. Good luck, Bret Harte! Good luck, my gold-digger!"

Th. Dentzon has charmingly introduced some of Harte's California sketches to the French world of readers, and, in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* he has given at great length a critical analysis of the powers and genius of our favorite story-teller. Our French and German friends alike wrestle with the difficulties of the untranslatable; but, *malgre* their failure to master the dialect of the gold-digger, they reproduce admirably the delicate finish and felicitous manipulation of the author. Thus his genius has found expression in many languages, and the gentle, loving spirit which animates his works lives and walks in other lands beyond the sea.

MIGGLES

We were eight including the driver We had not spoken during the passage of the last six miles, since the jolting of the heavy vehicle over the roughening road had spoiled the Judge's last poetical quotation. The tall man beside the Judge was asleep, his arm passed through the swaying strap and his head resting upon it,—altogether a limp, helpless looking object, as if he had hanged himself and been cut down too late. The French lady on the back seat was asleep too, yet in a half-conscious propriety of attitude, shown even in the disposition of the handkerchief which she held to her forehead and which partially veiled her face. The lady from Virginia City, traveling with her husband, had long since lost all individuality in a wild confusion of ribbons, veils, furs, and shawls. There was no sound but the rattling of wheels and the dash of rain upon the

roof. Suddenly the stage stopped and we became dimly aware of voices. The driver was evidently in the midst of an exciting colloquy with some one in the road,—a colloquy of which such fragments as "bridge gone," "twenty feet of water," "can't pass," were occasionally distinguishable above the storm. Then came a lull, and a mysterious voice from the road shouted the parting adjuration—

"Try Miggles's."

We caught a glimpse of our leaders as the vehicle slowly turned, of a horseman vanishing through the rain, and we were evidently on our way to Miggles's.

Who and where was Miggles? The Judge, our authority, did not remember the name, and he knew the country thoroughly. The Washoe traveler thought Miggles must keep a hotel. We only knew that we were stopped by high water in front and rear, and that Miggles was our rock of refuge. A ten minutes' splashing through a tangled byroad, scarcely wide enough for the stage, and we drew up before a barred and boarded gate in a wide stone wall or fence about

eight feet high. Evidently Miggles's, and evidently Miggles did not keep a hotel.

The driver got down and tried the gate. It was securely locked.

"Miggles! O Miggles!"

No answer.

"Migg-ells! You Miggles!" continued the driver, with rising wrath.

"Migglesy!" joined in the expressman persuasively. "O Miggy! Mig!"

But no reply came from the apparently insensate Miggles. The Judge, who had finally got the window down, put his head out and propounded a series of questions, which if answered categorically would have undoubtedly elucidated the whole mystery, but which the driver evaded by replying that "if we didn't want to sit in the coach all night we had better rise up and sing out for Miggles."

So we rose up and called on Miggles in chorus, then separately. And when we had finished, a Hiberian fellow passenger from the roof called for "Maygells!" whereat we all laughed. While we were laughing the driver cried, "Shoo!"

We listened. To our infinite amazement the chorus of "Miggles" was repeated from the other side of the wall, even to the final and supplemental "Maygells."

"Extraordinary echo!" said the Judge.

"Extraordinary d——d skunk!" roared the driver contemptuously. "Come out of that, Miggles, and show yourself! Be a man, Miggles! Don't hide in the dark; I wouldn't if I were you, Miggles," continued Yuba Bill now dancing about in an excess of fury.

"Miggles!" continued the voice. "O Miggles!"

"MY good man! Mr. Myghail," said the Judge, softening the asperities of the name as much as possible, "consider the inhospitality of refusing shelter from the inclemency of the weather to helpless females. Really, my dear sir"— But a succession of Miggles, ending in a burst of laughter, drowned his voice.

Yuba Bill hesitated no longer. Taking a heavy stone from the road, he battered down the gate, and with the expressman entered the inclosure. We fol-

lowed. Nobody was to be seen. In the gathering darkness all that we could distinguish was that we were in a garden—from the rose bushes that scattered over us a minute spray from their dripping leaves—and before a long, rambling wooden building.

"Do you know this Miggles?" asked the Judge of Yuba Bill.

"No, nor don't want to," said Bill shortly, who felt the Pioneer Stage Company insulted in his person by the contumacious Miggles.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated the Judge, as he thought of the barred gate.

"Lookee here," said Yuba Bill, with fine irony, "hadn't you better go back and sit in the coach till yer introduced? I'm going in," and he pushed open the door of the building.

A long room, lighted only by the embers of a fire that was dying on the large hearth at its farther extremity; the walls curiously papered, and the flickering firelight bringing out its grotesque pattern; somebody sitting in a large armchair by the fireplace. All this we saw as we

crowded together into the room after the driver and expressman.

"Hello! be you Miggles?" said Yuba Bill to the solitary occupant.

The figure neither spoke nor stirred. Yuba Bill walked wrathfully toward it and turned the eye of his coach-lantern upon its face. It was a man's face, prematurely old and wrinkled, with very large eyes, in which there was that expression of perfectly gratuitous solemnity which I had sometimes seen in an owl's. The large eyes wandered from Bill's face to the lantern, and finally fixed their gaze on that luminous object without further recognition.

Bill restrained himself with an effort.

"Miggles! be you deaf? You ain't dumb anyhow, you know," and Yuba Bill shook the insensate figure by the shoulder.

To our great dismay, as Bill removed his hand, the venerable stranger apparently collapsed, sinking into half his size and an undistinguishable heap of clothing.

"Well, dern my skin," said Bill, look-

ing appealingly at us, and hopelessly retiring from the contest.

The Judge now stepped forward, and we lifted the mysterious invertebrate back into his original position. Bill was dismissed with the lantern to reconnoitre outside, for it was evident, that from the helplessness of this solitary man, there must be attendants near at hand, and we all drew around the fire. The Judge, who had regained his authority, and had never lost his conversational amiability,—standing before us with his back to the hearth,—charged us, as an imaginary jury, as follows:

"It is evident that either our distinguished friend here has reached that condition described by Shakespeare as 'the sere and yellow leaf,' or has suffered some premature abatement of his mental and physical faculties. Whether he is really the Miggles"—

Here he was interrupted by "Miggles! O Miggles! Migglesy! Mig!" and, in fact, the whole chorus of Miggles in very much the same key as it had once before been delivered unto us.

We gazed at each other for a moment in some alarm. The Judge, in particular, vacated his position quickly, as the voice seemed to come directly over his shoulder. The cause, however, was soon discovered in a large magpie who was perched upon a shelf over the fireplace, and who immediately relapsed into a sepulchral silence, which contrasted singularly with his previous volubility. It was, undoubtedly, his voice which we had heard in the road, and our friend in the chair was not responsible for the discourtesy. Yuba Bill, who re-entered the room after an unsuccessful search, was loath to accept the explanation, and still eyed the helpless sitter with suspicion. He had found a shed in which he had put up his horses, but he came back dripping and skeptical. "Thar ain't nobody but him within ten mile of the shanty, and that ar d——d old skeesicks knows it."

But the faith of the majority proved to be securely based. Bill had scarcely ceased growling before we heard a quick step upon the porch, the trailing of a wet skirt, the door was flung open, and with

a flash of white teeth, a sparkle of dark eyes, and an utter absence of ceremony or diffidence, a young woman entered, shut the door, and, panting, leaned back against it.

"Oh, if you please, I'm Miggles!"

And this was Miggles! this bright-eyed, full-throated young woman, whose wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide the beauty of the feminine curves to which it clung; from the chestnut crown of whose head, topped by a man's oil-skin sou'wester, to the little feet and ankles, hidden somewhere in the recesses of her boy's brogans, all was grace,—this was Miggles, laughing at us, too, in the most airy, frank, off-hand manner imaginable.

"You see, boys," said she, quite out of breath, and holding one little hand against her side, quite unheeding the speechless discomfiture of our party or the complete demoralization of Yuba Bill, whose features had relaxed into an expression of gratuitous and imbecile cheerfulness,—"you see, boys, I was mor'n two miles away when you passed down

the road. I thought you might pull up here, and so I ran the whole way, knowing nobody was home but Jim,—and—and—I'm out of breath—and—that—lets me out." And here Miggles caught her dripping oilskin hat from her head, with a mischievous swirl that scattered a shower of raindrops over us; attempted to put back her hair; dropped two hairpins in the attempt; laughed and sat down beside Yuba Bill, with her hands crossed lightly on her lap.

The Judge recovered himself first and essayed an extravagant compliment.

"I'll trouble you for that ha'rpin," said Miggles gravely. Half a dozen hands were eagerly stretched forward; the missing hairpin was restored to its fair owner; and Miggles, crossing the room, looked keenly in the face of the invalid.

The solemn eyes looked back at hers with an expression we had never seen before. Life and intelligence seemed to struggle back into the rugged face. Miggles laughed again,—it was a singularly eloquent laugh,—and turned her black

eyes and white teeth once more towards us.

"This afflicted person is"—hesitated the Judge.

"Jim!" said Miggles.

"Your father?"

"No!"

"Brother?"

"No!"

"Husband?"

Miggles darted a quick, half-defiant glance at the two lady passengers, who I had noticed did not participate in the general masculine admiration of Miggles, and said, gravely, "No; it's Jim!"

There was an awkward pause. The lady passengers moved closer to each other; the Washoe husband looked abstractly at the fire, and the tall man apparently turned his eyes inward for self-support at this emergency. But Miggles's laugh, which was very infectious, broke the silence.

"Come," she said briskly, "you must be hungry. Who'll bear a hand to help me get tea?"

She had no lack of volunteers. In a

few moments Yuba Bill was engaged like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda; the expressman was grinding coffee on the veranda; to myself the arudous duty of slicing bacon was assigned; and the Judge lent each man his good-humored and voluble counsel. And when Miggles, assisted by the Judge and our Hiberian "deck-passenger," set the table with all the available crockery, we had become quite joyous, in spite of the rain that beat against the windows, the wind that whirled down the chimney, the two ladies who whispered together in the corner, or the magpie, who uttered a satirical and croaking commentary on their conversation from his perch above. In the now bright, blazing fire we could see that the walls were papered with illustrated journals, arranged with feminine taste and discrimination. The furniture was extemporized and adapted from candle-boxes and packing-cases, and covered with gay calico or the skin of some animal. The armchair of the helpless Jim was an ingenious variation of a flour barrel. There was neatness and even a taste

for the picturesque to be seen in the few details of the long, low room.

The meal was a culinary success. But more, it was a social triumph,—chiefly, I think, owing to the rare tact of Miggles in guiding the conversation, asking all the questions herself, yet bearing throughout a frankness that rejected the idea of any concealment on her own part, so that we talked of ourselves, of our prospects, of the journey, of the weather, of each other,—of everything but our host and hostess. It must be confessed that Miggles's conversation was never elegant, rarely grammatical, and that at times she employed expletives the use of which had generally been yielded to our sex. But they were delivered with such a lighting up of teeth and eyes, and were usually followed by a laugh—a laugh peculiar to Miggles—so frank and honest that it seemed to clear the moral atmosphere.

Once during the meal we heard a noise like the rubbing of a heavy body against the outer walls of the house. This was shortly followed by a scratching and

sniffling at the door. "That's Joaquin," said Miggles, in reply to our questioning glances; "would you like to see him?" Before we could answer she had opened the door, and disclosed a half-grown grizzly, who instantly raised himself on his haunches, with his fore paws hanging down in the popular attitude of mendicancy, and looked admiringly at Miggles, with a very singular resemblance in his manner to Yuba Bill. "That's my watch-dog," said Miggles, in explanation. "Oh, he don't bite," she added, as the two lady passengers fluttered into a corner. "Does he, old Toppy?" (the latter remark being addressed directly to the sagacious Joaquin). "I tell you what, boys," continued Miggles, after she had fed and closed the door on Ursa Minor, "you were in big luck that Joaquin wasn't hanging round when you dropped in to-night."

"Where was he?" asked the Judge.

"With me," said Miggles. "Lord love you! he trots round with me nights like as if he was a man."

We were silent for a few moments, and listened to the wind. Perhaps we all had

the same picture before us,—of Miggles walking through the rainy woods with her savage guardian at her side. The Judge, I remember, said something about Una and her lion; but Miggles received it, as she did other compliments, with quiet gravity. Whether she was altogether unconscious of the admiration she excited,—she could hardly have been oblivious of Yuba Bill's adoration,—I know not; but her very frankness suggested a perfect sexual equality that was cruelly humiliating to the younger members of our party.

The incident of the bear did not add anything in Miggles's favor to the opinions of those of her sex who were present. In fact, the repast over, a chillness radiated from the two lady passengers that no pine boughs brought in by Yuba Bill and cast as a sacrifice upon the hearth could wholly overcome. Miggles felt it; and suddenly declaring that it was time to "turn in," offered to show the ladies to their bed in an adjoining room. "You boys will have to camp out here by the fire as well as you can," she added, "for

thar ain't but the one room."

Our sex—by which, my dear sir, I allude of course to the stronger portion of humanity—has been generally relieved from the imputation of curiosity or a fondness for gossip. Yet I am constrained to say, that hardly had the door closed on Miggles than we crowded together, whispering, snickering, smiling, and exchanging suspicions, surmises, and a thousand speculations in regard to our pretty hostess and her singular companion. I fear that we even hustled that imbecile paralytic, who sat like a voiceless Memnon in our midst, gazing with the serene indifference of the Past in his passionless eyes upon our wordy counsels. In the midst of an exciting discussion the door opened again and Miggles reentered.

But not, apparently, the same Miggles who a few hours before had flashed upon us. Her eyes were downcast, and as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, with a blanket on her arm, she seemed to have left behind her the frank fearlessness which had charmed us a moment

before. Coming into the room, she drew a low stool beside the paralytic's chair, sat down, drew the blanket over her shoulders, and saying, "If it's all the same to you, boys, as we're rather crowded, I'll stop here to-night," took the invalid's withered hand in her own, and turned her eyes upon the dying fire. An instinctive feeling that this was only premonitory to more confidential relations, and perhaps some shame at our previous curiosity, kept us silent. The rain still beat upon the roof, wandering gusts of wind stirred the embers into momentary brightness, until, in a lull of the elements, Miggles suddenly lifted up her head, and, throwing her hair over her shoulder, turned her face upon the group and asked,—

"Is there any of you that knows me?"

There was no reply.

"Think again! I lived at Marysville in '53. Everybody knew me there, and everybody had the right to know me. I kept the Polka Saloon until I came to live with Jim. That's six years ago. Perhaps I've changed some."

The absence of recognition may have disconcerted her. She turned her head to the fire again, and it was some seconds before she again spoke, and then more rapidly—

"Well, you see I thought some of you must have known me. There's no great harm done anyway. What I was going to say was this: Jim here"—she took his hand in both of hers as she spoke—"used to know me, if you didn't, and spent a heap of money upon me. I reckon he spent all he had. And one day—it's six years ago this winter—Jim came into my back room, sat down on my sofy, like as you see him in that chair, and never moved again without help. He was struck all of a heap, and never seemed to know what ailed him. The doctors came and said as how it was caused all along of his way of life,—for Jim was mighty free and wild-like,—and that he would never get better, and couldn't last long anyway. They advised me to send him to 'Frisco to the hospital, for he was no good to any one and would be a baby all his life. Perhaps it was something in

Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said 'No.' I was rich then, for I was popular with everybody,—gentlemen like yourself, sir, came to see me,—and I sold out my business and bought this yer place, because it was sort of out of the way of travel, you see, and I brought my baby here."

With a woman's intuitive tact and poetry, she had, as she spoke, slowly shifted her position so as it would bring the mute figure of the ruined man between her and her audience, hiding in the shadow behind it, as if she offered it as a tacit apology for her actions. Silent and expressionless, it yet spoke for her; helpless, crushed, and smitten with the Divine thunderbolt, it still stretched an invisible arm around her.

Hidden in the darkness, but still holding his hand, she went on:

"It was a long time before I could get the hang of things about yer, for I was used to company and excitement. I couldn't get any woman to help me, and a man I dursn't trust; but what with the Indians hereabout, who'd do odd jobs for

me, and having everything sent from the North Fork, Jim and I managed to worry through. The Doctor would run up from Sacramento once in a while. He'd ask to see 'Miggles's baby,' as he called Jim, and when he'd go away, he'd say, 'Miggles, you're a trump,—God bless you,' and it didn't seem so lonely after that. But the last time he was here he said, as he opened the door to go, 'Do you know, Miggles, your baby will grow up to be a man yet and an honor to his mother; but not here, Miggles, not here!" And I thought he went away sad,—and —and"—and here Miggles's voice and head were somehow both lost completely in the shadow.

"The folks about here are very kind," said Miggles, after a pause, coming a little into the light again. "The men from the Fork used to hang around here, until they found they wasn't wanted, and the women are kind, and don't call. I was pretty lonely until I picked up Joaquin in the woods yonder one day, when he wasn't so high, and taught him to beg for his dinner; and then thar's

Polly—that's the magpie—she knows no end of tricks, and makes it quite sociable of evenings with her talk, and so I don't feel like as I was the only living being about the ranch. And Jim here," said Miggles, with her old laugh again, and coming out quite into the firelight,—"Jim—Why, boys, you would admire to see how much he knows for a man like him. Sometimes I bring him flowers, and he looks at 'em just as natural as if he knew 'em; and times, when we're sitting alone, I read him those things on the wall. Why, Lord!" said Miggles, with her frank laugh, "I've read him that whole side of the house this winter. There never was such a man for reading as Jim."

"Why," asked the Judge, "do you not marry this man to whom you have devoted your youthful life?"

"Well, you see," said Miggles, "it would be playing it rather low down on Jim to take advantage of his being so helpless. And then, too, if we were man and wife, now, we'd both know that I was

bound to do what I do now of my own accord."

"But you are young yet and attractive"—

"It's getting late," said Miggles gravely," and you'd better all turn in. Goodnight, boys"; and throwing the blanket over her head, Miggles laid herself down beside Jim's chair, her head pillowed on the low stool that held his feet, and spoke no more. The fire slowly faded from the hearth; we each sought our blankets in silence; and presently there was no sound in the long room but the pattering of the rain upon the roof and the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

It was nearly morning when I awoke from a troubled dream. The storm had passed, the stars were shining, and through the shutterless window the full moon, lifting itself over the solemn pines without, looked into the room. It touched the lonely figure in the chair with an infinite compassion, and seemed to baptize with a shining flood the lowly head of the woman whose hair, as in the sweet old story, bathed the feet of him she loved.

It even lent a kindly poetry to the rugged outline of Yuba Bill, half reclining on his elbow between them and his passengers, with savagely patient eyes keeping watch and ward. And then I fell asleep and only woke at broad day, with Yuba Bill standing over me, and "all aboard" ringing in my ears.

Coffee was waiting for us on the table, but Miggles was gone. We wandered about the house and lingered long after the horses were harnessed, but she did not return. It was evident that she wished to avoid a formal leave-taking, and had so left us to depart as we had come. After we had helped the ladies into the coach, we returned to the house and solemnly shook hands with the paralytic Jim, as solemnly setting him back into position after each handshake. Then we looked for the last time around the long low room, at the stool where Miggles had sat, and slowly took our seats in the waiting coach. The whip cracked, and we were off!

But as we reached the highroad, Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back

on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last "good-by." We waved our hats in return. And then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses forward, and we sank back in our seats.

We exchanged not a word until we reached the North Fork and the stage drew up at the Independence House. Then, the Judge leading, we walked into the bar-room and took our places gravely at the bar.

"Are your glasses charged, gentlemen?" said the Judge, solemnly taking off his white hat.

They were.

"Well, then, here's to *Miggles*—GOD BLESS HER!"

Perhaps He had. Who knows?

THE ROSE OF TUOLUMNE

CHAPTER I

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The lights were out in Robinson's Hall, where there had been dancing and revelry, and the moon, riding high, painted the black windows with silver. The cavalcade that an hour ago had shocked the sedate pines with song and laughter were all dispersed; one enamored swain had ridden east, another west, another north, another south, and the object of their adoration, left within her bower at Chemisal Ridge, was calmly going to bed.

I regret that I am not able to indicate the exact stage of that process. Two chairs were already filled with delicate enwrappings and white confusion, and the young lady herself, half hidden in the silky threads of her yellow hair, had at one time borne a faint resemblance to a partly husked ear of Indian corn. But

she was now clothed in that one long, formless garment that makes all women equal, and the round shoulders and neat waist that an hour ago had been so fatal to the peace of mind of Four Forks had utterly disappeared. The face above it was very pretty; the foot below, albeit shapely, was not small. "The flowers, as a general thing, don't raise their heads *much* to look after me," she had said with superb frankness to one of her lovers.

The expression of "The Rose" to-night was contentedly placid. She walked slowly to the window, and, making the smallest possible peep-hole through the curtain, looked out. The motionless figure of a horseman still lingered on the road, with an excess of devotion that only a coquette or a woman very much in love could tolerate. "The Rose" at that moment was neither, and after a reasonable pause turned away, saying quite audibly, that it was "too ridiculous for anything." As she came back to her dressing-table it was noticeable that she walked steadily and erect, without that

slight affectation of lameness common to people with whom bare feet are only an episode. Indeed, it was only four years ago that, without shoes or stockings, a long-limbed, colty girl, in a waistless calico gown, she had leaped from the tail-board of her father's emigrant wagon when it first drew up at Chemisal Ridge. Certain wild habits of The Rose had outlived transplanting and cultivation.

A knock at the door surprised her. In another moment she had leaped into bed, and, with darkly frowning eyes, from its secure recesses demanded, "Who's there?"

An apologetic murmur on the other side of the door was the response.

"Why, father, is that you?"

There were further murmurs, affirmative, deprecatory, and persistent.

"Wait," said The Rose. She got up, unlocked the door, leaped nimbly into bed again, and said, "Come."

The door opened timidly. The broad, stooping shoulders and grizzled head of a man past the middle age appeared: after a moment's hesitation a pair of large, diffident feet, shod with canvas slippers,

concluded to follow. When the apparition was complete it closed the door softly, and stood there—a very shy ghost indeed, with apparently more than the usual spiritual indisposition to begin a conversation. The Rose resented this impatiently, though I fear not altogether intelligibly:

"Do, father, I declare!"

"You was abed, Jinny," said Mr. M'Closky slowly, glancing with a singular mixture of masculine awe and paternal pride upon the two chairs and their contents. "You was abed and undressed."

"I was."

"Surely," said Mr. M'Closky, seating himself on the extreme edge of the bed, and painfully tucking his feet away under it,—"surely." After a pause he rubbed a short, thick, stumpy beard, that bore a general resemblance to a badly worn blacking brush, with the palm of his hand, and went on, "You had a good time, Jinny?"

"Yes, father."

"They was all there?"

"Yes;Rance and York and Ryder and Jack."

"And Jack!" Mr. M'Closky endeavored to throw an expression of arch inquiry into his small, tremulous eyes, but meeting the unabashed, widely opened lid of his daughter, he winked rapidly and blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Yes, Jack was there," said Jinny, without change of color, or the least self-consciousness in her great grey eyes, "and he came home with me." She paused a moment, locking her two hands under her head, and assuming a more comfortable position on the pillow. "He asked me that same question again, father, and I said, 'Yes.' It's to be soon. We're going to live at Four Forks, in his own house, and next winter we're going to Sacramento. I suppose it's all right, father, eh?" She emphasized the question with a slight kick through the bedclothes as the parental M'Closky had fallen into an abstract reverie.

"Yes, surely," said Mr. M'Closky, recovering himself with some confusion. After a pause he looked down at the bed-

clothes, and, patting them tenderly, continued. "You couldn't have done better, Jinny. They isn't a girl in Tuolumne ez could strike it ez rich ez you hev—even if they got the chance." He paused again and then said, "Jinny?"

"Yes, father."

"You'se in bed and ondressed?"

"Yes."

"You couldn't," said Mr. M'Closky, glancing hopelessly at the two chairs and slowing rubbing his chin,—"you couldn't dress yourself again, could yer?"

"Why, father?"

"Kinder get yourself into them things again?" he added hastily. "Not all of 'em, you know, but some of 'em. Not if I helped you?—sorter stood by and lent a hand now and then with a strap or a buckle, or a necktie or a shoe-string," he continued, still looking at the chairs, and evidently trying to boldly familiarize himself with their contents.

"Are you crazy, father?" demanded Jinny, suddenly sitting up with a portentous switch of her yellow mane. Mr. M'Closky rubbed one side of his beard,

which already had the appearance of having been quite worn away by that process, and faintly dodged the question.

"Jinny," he said, tenderly stroking the bedclothes as he spoke, "this yer's what's the matter. Thar is a stranger downstairs —a stranger to you, lovey, but a man ez I've knowed a long time. He's been here about an hour, and he'll be here until fower o'clock, when the up stage passes. Now I wants ye, Jinny, dear, to get up and come downstairs and kinder help me pass the time with him. It's no use, Jinny," he went on, gently raising his hand to deprecate any interruption,—"its no use, he won't go to bed! He won't play keerds; whiskey don't take no effect on him. Ever since I knowed him he was the most onsatisfactory critter to hev round"—

"What do you have him round for, then?" interrupted Miss Jinny sharply

Mr. M'Closky's eyes fell. "Ef he hedn't kem out of his way to-night to do me a good turn, I wouldn't ask ye, Jinny. I wouldn't, so help me! But I thought ez I couldn't do anything with him, you

might come down and sorter fetch him, Jinny, as you did the others."

Miss Jinny shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Is he old or young?"

"He's young enough, Jinny, but he knows a power of things."

"What does he do."

"Not much, I reckon. He's got money in the mill at Four Forks. He travels round a good deal. I've heard, Jinny, that he's a poet—write them rhymes, you know." Mr. M'Closky here appealed submissively, but directly to his daughter. He remembered that she had frequently been in receipt of printed elegiac couplets known as "mottoes," containing inclosures equally saccharine.

Miss Jinny slightly curled her pretty lip. She had that fine contempt for the illusions of fancy which belongs to the perfectly healthy young animal.

"Not," continued Mr. M'Closky, rubbing his head reflectively,—"not ez I'd advise ye, Jinny, to say anything to him about poetry. It ain't twenty minutes ago ez *I* did. I set the whiskey afore him

in the parlor. I wound up the music-box and set it goin'. Then I sez to him, sociable-like and free, "Jest consider yourself in your own house, and repeat what you allow to be your finest production," —and he raged. That man, Jinny, jest raged Thar's no end of names he called me. You see, Jinny," continued Mr. M'Closky apologetically, "he's known me a long time."

But his daughter had already dismissed the question with her usual directness. "I'll be down in a few moments, father." she said after a pause, "but don't say anything to him about it—don't say I was abed."

Mr. M'Closky's face beamed. "You was allers a good girl, Jinny," he said, dropping on one knee the better to imprint a respectful kiss on her forehead. But Jinny caught him by the wrists and for a moment held him captive. "Father," said she, trying to fix his shy eyes with the clear, steady glance of her own, "all the girls that were there tonight had some one with them. Mame Robinson had her aunt, Lucy Rance had

her mother, Kate Pierson had her sister—all except me had some other woman. Father, dear,"—her lip trembled just a little,—"I wish mother hadn't died when I was so small. I wish there was some other woman in the family beside me. I ain't lonely with you, father, dear; but if there was only some one, you know, when the time comes for John and me"—

Her voice here suddenly gave out, but not her brave eyes, that were still fixed earnestly upon his face. Mr. M'Closky, apparently tracing out a pattern on the bed-quilt, essayed words of comfort.

"There ain't one of them gals ez you've named, Jinny, ez could do what you've done with a whole Noah's ark of relations at their backs! Thar ain't one wouldn't sacrifice her nearest relation to make the strike that you hev. Ez to mothers, maybe, my dear, you're doin' better without one." He rose suddenly, and walked toward the door. When he reached it he turned, and in his old deprecating manner, said, "Don't be long, Jinny," smiled, and vanished from the head downward, his canvas slippers as-

serting themselves resolutely to the last.

When Mr. M'Closky reached his parlor again his troublesome guest was not there. The decanter stood on the table untouched, three or four books lay upon the floor, a number of photographic views of the Sierras were scattered over the sofa; two sofa pillows, a newspaper, and a Mexican blanket lay on the carpet, as if the late occupant of the room had tried to read in a recumbent position. A French window, opening upon a veranda, which never before in the history of the house had been unfastened, now betrayed by its waving lace curtain the way that the fugitive had escaped. Mr. M'Closky heaved a sigh of despair; he looked at the gorgeous carpet purchased in Sacramento at a fabulous price, at the crimson satin and rosewood furniture unparalled in the history of Tuolumne, at the massively framed pictures on the walls, and looked beyond it, through the open window, to the reckless man who, fleeing these sybaritic allurements, was smoking a cigar upon the moonlit road. This room, which had so

often awed the youth of Tuolumne into filial respect, was evidently a failure. It remained to be seen if the Rose herself had lost her fragrance. "I reckon Jinny will fetch him yet," said Mr. M'Closky, with parental faith.

He stepped from the window upon the veranda. But he had scarcely done this before his figure was detected by the stranger, who at once crossed the road. When within a few feet of M'Closky he stopped. "You persistent old plantigrade," he said in a low voice, audible only to the person addressed, and a face full of affected anxiety, "why don't you go to bed? Didn't I tell you to go and leave me here alone? In the name of all that's idiotic and imbecile, why do you continue to shuffle about here? Or are you trying to drive me crazy with your presence, as you have with that wretched music-box that I've just dropped under yonder tree? It's an hour and a half yet before the stage passes; do you think, do you imagine for a single moment, that I can tolerate you until then—eh? Why don't you speak? Are you asleep? You

don't mean to say that you have the audacity to add somnambulism to your other weaknesses; you're not low enough to repeat yourself under any such weak pretext as that—eh?"

A fit of nervous coughing ended this extraordinary exordium, and half sitting, half leaning against the veranda, Mr. M'Closky's guest turned his face, and part of a slight, elegant figure, towards his host. The lower portion of this upturned face wore an habitual expression of fastidious discontent, with an occasional line of physical suffering. But the brow above was frank and critical, and a pair of dark mirthful eyes sat in playful judgment over the supersensitive mouth and its suggestion.

"I allowed to go to bed, Ridgeway," said Mr. Mc'Closky meekly, "but my girl Jinny's jist got back from a little tear up at Robinson's, and ain't inclined to turn in yet. You know what girls is. So I thought we three would jist have a social chat together to pass away the time."

"You mendacious old hypocrite! she

got back an hour ago," said Ridgeway, "as that savage-looking escort of hers, who has been haunting the house ever since, can testify. My belief is, that, like an enterprising idiot as you are, you've dragged that girl out of her bed that we might mutually bore each other."

Mr. M'Closky was too much stunned by this evidence of Ridgeway's apparently superhuman penetration to reply. After enjoying his host's confusion for a moment with his eyes, Ridgeway's mouth asked grimly,—

"And who is this girl, anyway?"

"Nancy's."

"Your wife's?"

"Yes. But look yar, Ridgeway," said M'Closky, laying one hand imploringly on Ridgeway's sleeve, "not a word about her to Jinny. She thinks her mother's dead—died in Missouri. Eh!"

Ridgeway nearly rolled from the veranda in an excess of rage. "Good God! Do you mean to say that you have been concealing from her a fact that any day, any moment, may come to her ears? That you've been letting her grow up in

ignorance of something that by this time she might have outgrown and forgotten? That you have been, like a besotted old ass, all these years slowly forging a thunderbolt that any one may crush her with? That"—but here Ridgeway's cough took possession of his voice, and even put a moisture into his dark eyes, as he looked at M'Closky's aimless hand feebly employed upon his beard.

"But," said M'Closky, "look, how she's done. She's held her head as high as any of 'em. She's to be married in a mo[illegible] to the richest man in the county, and," he added cunningly, "Jack Ashe ain't the kind o' man to sit by and hear anything said of his wife or her relations, you bet. But hush—that's her foot on the stairs. She's cummin'."

She came. I don't think the French window ever held a finer view than when she put aside the curtains and stepped out. She had dressed herself simply and hurriedly, but with a woman's knowledge of her best points, so that you got the long curves of her shapely limbs, the shorter curves of her round waist and

shoulders, the long sweep of her yellow braids, the light of her gray eyes, and even the delicate rose of her complexion, without knowing how it was delivered to you.

The introduction by Mr. M'Closky was brief. When Ridgeway had got over the fact that it was two o'clock in the morning, and that the cheek of this Tuolumne goddess nearest him was as dewy and fresh as an infant's,—that she looked like Marguerite, without probably ever having heard of Goethe's heroine,—he talked, I dare say, very sensibly. When Miss Jinny, who from her childhood had been brought up among the sons of Anak, and who was accustomed to have a supremacy of our noble sex presented to her as a physical fact, found herself in the presence of a new and strange power in the slight and elegant figure beside her, she was at first frightened and cold. But finding that this power, against which the weapons of her own physical charms were of no avail, was a kindly one, albeit general, she fell to worshiping it, after the fashion of woman, and casting

before it the fetiches and other idols of her youth. She even confessed to it. So that in half an hour Ridgeway was in possession of all the facts connected with her life, and a great many, I fear, of her fancies—except one. When Mr. M'Closky found the young people thus amicably dispose, he calmly went to sleep.

It was a pleasant time to each. To Miss Jinny it had the charm of novelty, and she abandoned herself to it for that reason much more freely and innocently than her companion, who knew something more of the inevitable logic of the position. I do not think, however, he had any intention of love-making. I do not think he was at all conscious of being in the attitude. I am quite positive he would have shrunk from the suggestion of disloyalty to the one woman whom he admitted to himself he loved. But, like most poets, he was much more true to an idea than a fact, and, having a very lofty conception of womanhood, with a very sanguine nature, he saw in each new face the possibilities of a realization of his ideal. It was, perhaps, an unfortu-

nate thing for the women, particularly as he brought to each trial a surprising freshness which was very deceptive, and quite distinct from the *blase* familiarity of the man of gallantry. It was this perennial virginity of the affections that most endeared him to the best women, who were prone to exercise towards him a chivalrous protection,—as of one likely to go astray unless looked after,—and indulged in the dangerous combination of sentiment with the highest maternal instincts. It was this quality which caused Jinny to recognize in him a certain boyishness that required her womanly care, and even induced her to offer to accompany him to the cross-roads when the time of his departure arrived. With her superior knowledge of woodcraft and the locality, she would have kept him from being lost. I wot not but that she would have protected him from bears or wolves, but chiefly, I think, from the feline fascinations of Mame Robinson and Lucy Rance, who might be lying in wait for this tender young poet. Nor did she cease to be thankful that Providence had,

so to speak, delivered him as a trust into her hands.

It was a lovely night. The moon swung low and languished softly on the snowy ridge beyond. There were quaint odors in the still air, and a strange incense from the woods perfumed their young blood and seemed to swoon in their pulses. Small wonder that they lingered on the white road, that their feet climbed unwillingly the little hill where they were to part, and that when they at last reached it, even the saving grace of speech seemed to have forsaken them.

For there they stood, alone. There was no sound nor motion in earth, or woods, or heaven. They might have been the one man and woman for whom this goodly earth that lay at their feet, rimmed with the deepest azure, was created. And seeing this, they turned towards each other with a sudden instinct, and their hands met, and then their lips in one long kiss.

And then out of the mysterious distance came the sound of voices and the sharp clatter of hoofs and wheels, and

Jinny slid away—a white moonbeam—from the hill. For a moment she glimmered through the trees, and then, reaching the house, passed her sleeping father on the veranda, and, darting into her bedroom, locked the door, threw open the window, and, falling on her knees beside it, leaned her hot cheeks upon her hands and listened. In a few moments she was rewarded by the sharp clatter of hoofs on the road, but it was only a horseman, whose dark figure was swiftly lost in the shadows of the lower road. At another time she might have recognized the man, but her eyes and ears were now all intent on something else. It came presently, with dancing lights, a musical rattle of harness, a cadence of hoof-beats, that set her heart to beating in unison, and was gone. A sudden sense of loneliness came over her, and tears gathered in her sweet eyes.

She arose and looked around her. There was the little bed, the dressing-table, the roses that she had worn last night, still fresh and blooming in the little vase.

Everything was there, but everything looked strange; the roses should have been withered, for the party seemed so long ago, she could hardly remember when she had worn this dress that lay upon the chair. So she came back to the window and sank down beside it, with her cheek, a trifle paler, leaning on her hand, and her long braids reaching to the floor. The stars paled slowly, like her cheek, yet with eyes that saw not she still looked from her window for the coming dawn.

It came with the violet deepening into purple, with purple flushing into rose, with rose shining into silver and glowing into gold. The straggling line of black picket fence below, that had faded away with the stars, came back with the sun. What was that object moving by the fence? Jinny raised her head and looked intently. It was a man endeavoring to climb the pickets, and falling backward with each attempt. Suddenly she started to her feet, as if the rosy flushes of the dawn had crimsoned her from forehead to shoulders; then she stood, white as the

wall, with her hands clasped upon her bosom. Then, with a single bound she reached the door, and, with flying braids and fluttering skirt, sprang down the stairs and out in the garden walk. When within a few feet of the fence she uttered a cry—the first she had given—the cry of a mother over her stricken babe, of a tigress over her mangled cub, and in another moment she had leaped the fence and knelt beside Ridgeway, with his fainting head upon her breast.

"My Boy—my poor, poor boy! who has done this?"

Who, indeed? His clothes were covered with dust, his waistcoat was torn open; and his handkerchief, wet with the blood it could not stanch, fell from a cruel stab beneath his shoulder.

"Ridgeway!—my poor boy—tell me what has happened."

Ridgeway slowly opened his heavy, blue-veined lids and gazed upon her. Presently a gleam of mischief came into his dark eyes, a smile stole over his lips as he whispered slowly,—

"It—was—your kiss—did it—Jinny,

dear! I had forgotten—how high-priced —the article was here. Never mind, Jinny!"—he feebly raised her hand to his white lips—"it was worth it," and fainted away.

Jinny started to her feet and looked wildly around her. Then, with a sudden resolution, she stooped over the insensible man, and, with one strong effort, lifted him in her arms as if he had been a child. When her father, a moment later, rubbed his eyes and awoke from his sleep upon the veranda, it was to see a goddess, erect and triumphant, striding toward the house, with the helpless body of a man lying across that breast where man had never lain before,—a goddess at whose imperious mandate he arose and cast open the doors before her. And then when she had laid her unconscious burden on the sofa, the goddess fled, and a woman, helpless and trembling, stood before him,—a woman that cried out that she had "killed him," that she was "wicked,! wicked! wicked!" and that, even saying so, staggered and fell beside her late burden. And all that Mr.

M'Closky could do was to feebly rub his beard, and say to himself, vaguely and incoherently, that "Jinny had fetched him."

CHAPTER II

Before noon the next day it was generally believed throughout Four Forks that Ridgeway Dent had been attacked and wounded at Chemisal Ridge by a highwayman, who fled on the approach of the Wingdam coach. It is to be presumed that this statement met with Ridgeway's approval, as he did not contradict it, nor supplement it with any details. His wound was severe, but not dangerous. After the first excitement had subsided, there was, I think, a prevailing impression, common to the provincial mind, that his misfortune was the result of the defective moral quality of his being a stranger, and was in a vague sort of a way a warning to others and a lesson to him. "Did you hear how that San Francisco feller was took down the other night?" was the average tone of intro-

ductory remark. Indeed, there was a general suggestion that Ridgeway's presence was one that no self-respecting, high-minded highwayman, honorably conservative of the best interests of Tuolumne County, could for a moment tolerate.

Except for the few words spoken on that eventful morning, Ridgeway was reticent of the past. When Jinny strove to gather some details of the affray that might offer a clue to his unknown assailant, a subtle twinkle in his brown eyes was the only response. When Mr. M'Closky attempted the same process, the young gentleman threw abusive epithets, and eventually slippers, teaspoons, and other lighter articles within the reach of an invalid, at the head of his questioner. "I think he's coming round, Jinny," said Mr. M'Closky; "he laid for me this morning with a candlestick."

It was about this time that Miss Jinny, having sworn her father to secrecy regarding the manner in which Ridgeway had been carried into the house, conceived the idea of addressing the young man as "Mr. Dent," and of apologizing for in-

truding whenever she entered the room in the discharge of her household duties. It was about this time that she became more rigidly conscientious to those duties, and less general in her attentions; it was at this time that the quality of the invalid's diet improved, and that she consulted him less frequently about it. It was about this time that she began to see more company, that the house was greatly frequented by her former admirers, with whom she rode, walked, and danced. It was at about this time, also, and when Ridgeway was able to be brought out on the veranda in a chair, that, with great archness of manner, she introduced to him Miss Lucy Ashe, the sister of her betrothed—a flashing brunette and terrible heart-breaker of Four Forks. And in the midst of this gayety she concluded that she would spend a week with the Robinsons, to whom she owed a visit. She enjoyed herself greatly there, so much, indeed, that she became quite hollow-eyed, the result, as she explained to her father, of a too frequent indulgence in festivity. "You see, father, I won't

have many chances after John and I are married,—you know how queer he is,—and I must make the most of my time," and she laughed an odd little laugh, which had lately become habitual to her. "And how is Mr. Dent getting on?" Her father replied that he was getting on very well indeed, so well, in fact, that he was able to leave for San Francisco two days ago. "He wanted to be remembered to you, Jinny—"remembered kindly,"—yes, they is the very words he used," said Mr. M'Closky, looking down and consulting one of his large shoes for corroboration. Miss Jinny was glad to hear that he was so much better. Miss Jinny could not imagine anything that pleased her more than to know that he was so strong as to be able to rejoin his friends again, who must love him so much and be so anxious about him. Her father thought she would be pleased, and now that he was gone there was really no necessity for her to hurry back. Miss Jinny, in a high, metallic voice, did not know that she had expressed any desire to stay; still if her presence had become distasteful at home

—if her own father was desirous of getting rid of her—if, when she was so soon to leave his roof forever, he still begrudged her those few days remaining—if —"My God, Jinny, so help me!" said Mr. M'Closky, clutching despairingly at his beard; "I didn't go for to say anything of the kind. I thought that you"—

"Never mind, father," interrupted Jinny magnanimously, "you misunderstood me; of course you did, you couldn't help it—you're a MAN!" Mr. McClosky, sorely crushed, would have vaguely protested, but his daughter, having relieved herself, after the manner of her sex, with a mental personal application of an abstract statement, forgave him with a kiss.

Nevertheless, for two or three days after her return, Mr. M'Closky followed his daughter about the house with yearning eyes, and occasionally with timid, diffident, feet. Sometimes he came upon her suddenly at her household tasks with an excuse so palpably false, and a careless manner so outrageously studied, that she

was fain to be embarrassed for him. Later he took to rambling about the house at night, and was often seen noiselessly passing and repassing through the hall after she had retired. On one occasion he was surprised first by sleep and then by the early rising Jinny as he lay on the rug outside her chamber door. "You treat me like a child, father," said Jinny. "I thought, Jinny," said the father apologetically,—"I thought I heard sounds as if you was takin' on inside, and listenin' I fell asleep." "You dear, old, simple-minded baby," said Jinny, looking past her father's eyes, and lifting his grizzled locks one by one with meditative fingers; "what should I be takin' on for? Look how much taller I am than you," she said, suddenly lifting herself up to the extreme of her superb figure. Then rubbing his head rapidly with both hands, as if she were anointing his hair with some rare unguent, she patted him on the back and returned to her room. The result of this and one or two other equally sympathetic interviews was to produce a change in Mr. M'Clos-

ky's manner, which was, if possible, still more discomposing. He grew unjustifiably hilarious, cracked jokes with the servants, and repeated to Jinny humorous stories, with the attitude of facetiousness carefully preserved throughout the entire narration, and the point utterly ignored and forgotten. Certain incidents reminded him of funny things, which invariably turned out to have not the slightest relevancy or application. He occasionally brought home with him practical humorists, with a sanguine hope of setting them going, like the music box, for his daughter's edification. He essayed the singing of melodies with great freedom of style and singular limitation of note. He sang "Come, Haste to the Wedding, ye Lasses and Maidens," of which he knew a single line, and that incorrectly, as being peculiarly apt and appropriate. Yet away from the house and his daughter's presence he was silent and distraught. His absence of mind was particularly noted by his workmen at the Empire Quartz Mill. "Ef the old man don't look out and wake up," said his

foreman, "he'll hev them feet of his yet under the stamps. When he ain't givin' his mind to 'em, they is altogether too promiskuss."

A few nights later, Miss Jinny recognized her father's hand in a timid tap at the door. She opened it, and he stood before her, with a valise in his hand, equipped as for a journey. "I takes the stage to-night, Jinny, dear, from Four Forks to 'Frisco. Maybe I may drop in on Jack afore I go. I'll be back in a week. Good-by."

"Good-by." He still held her hand. Presently he drew her back into the room, closing the door carefully, and glancing around. There was a look of profound cunning in his eye as he said slowly,—

"Bear up and keep dark, Jinny, dear, and trust to the old man. Various men has various ways. Thar is ways as is common and ways as is oncommon, ways as is easy and ways as is oneasy. Bear up and keep dark." With this Delphic utterance he put his finger to his lips and vanished.

It was ten o'clock when he reached Four Forks. A few minutes later he stood on the threshold of that dwelling described by the Four Forks "Sentinel" as "the palatial residence of John Ashe," and known to the local satirist as the "ash-box." "Hevin' to lay by two hours, John," he said to his prospective son-in-law, as he took his hand at the door, "a few words of social converse, not on business, but strictly private, seems to be about as nat'ral a thing as a man can do." This introduction, evidently the result of some study and plainly committed to memory, seemed so satisfactory to Mr. M'Closky that he repeated it again, after John Ashe had led him into his private office, where, depositing his valise in the middle of the floor, and sitting down before it, he began to avoid the eye of his host. John Ashe, a tall, dark, handsome Kentuckian—with whom even the trifles of life were evidently full of serious import—waited with a kind of chivalrous respect the further speech of his guest. Being utterly devoid of any sense of the ridiculous, he always accepted Mr.

M'Closky as a grave fact, singular only from his own want of experience of the class.

"Ores is running light now," said Mr. McClosky, with easy indifference.

John Ashe returned that he had noticed the same fact in the receipts of the mill at Four Forks.

Mr. M'Closky rubbed his beard and looked at his valise, as if for sympathy and suggestion.

"You don't reckon on having any trouble with any of them chaps ez you cut out with Jinny?"

John Ashe, rather haughtily, had never thought of that. "I saw Rance hanging round your house the other night when I took your daughter home, but he gave me a wide berth," he added carelessly.

"Surely," said Mr. M'Closky, with a peculiar winking of the eye. After a pause, he took a fresh departure from his valise.

"A few words, John, ez between man and man, ez between my daughter's father and her husband who expects to be, is about the thing, I take it, as is fair

and square. I kem here to say them. They're about Jinny, my gal."

Ashe's grave face brightened, to Mr. M'Closky's evident discomposure.

"Maybe I should have said, about her mother; but the same bein' a stranger to you, I says, nat'rally, 'Jinny.'"

Ashe nodded courteously. Mr. M'Closky, with his eyes on his valise, went on:

"It is sixteen years ago as I married Mrs. M'Closky in the State of Missouri. She let on, at the time, to be a widder,—a widder with one child. When I say let on, I mean to imply that I subsequently found out that she was not a widder, nor a wife, and the father of the child was, so to speak, onbeknowst. That child was Jinny—my gal."

With his eyes on his valise, and quietly ignoring the wholly crimsoned face and swiftly darkening brow of his host, he continued,—

"Many little things sorter tended to make our home in Missouri onpleasant. A disposition to smash furniture and heave knives around, and inclination to howl when drunk, and that frequent; a

habitooal use of vulgar language, and a tendency to cuss the casooal visitor, seemed to pint," added Mr. M'Closky with submissive hesitation—"thet—she—was—so to speak—quite onsuited to the marriage relation in its holiest aspeck."

"Damnation! Why didn't"—burst out John Ashe, erect and furious.

"At the end of two years," continued Mr. M'Closky, still intent on the valise, "I allowed I'd get a diworce. Et about thet time, however, Providence sends a circus into thet town and a feller ez rode three hosses to onct. Hevin' allez a taste for athletic sports, she left town with this feller, leavin' me and Jinny behind. I sent word to her thet if she would give Jinny to me we'd call it quits. And she did."

"Tell me," gasped Ashe, "did you ask your daughter to keep this from me, or did she do it of her own accord?"

"She doesn't know it," said Mr. M'Closky. "She thinks I'm her father and that her mother's dead."

"Then, sir, this is your"—

"I don't know," said Mr. M'Closky

slowly, "ez I've asked any one to marry my Jinny. I don't know ez I've persood that ez a biziness, or even taken it up as a healthful recreation."

John Ashe paced the room furiously. Mr. M'Closky's eyes left the valise and followed him curiously. "Where is this woman?" demanded Ashe suddenly. M'Closky's eyes sought the valise again.

"She went to Kansas; from Kansas she went into Texas. From Texas she eventooally came to Californy. Being here, I've purvided her with money—when her business was slack—through a friend."

John Ashe groaned. "She's gettin' rather old and shaky for hosses, and now does the tight-rope business and flying-trapeze. Never hevin' seen her perform," continued Mr. M'Closky, with conscientious caution, "I can't say how she gets on. On the bills she looks well. Thar is a poster," said M'Closky, glancing at Ashe, and opening his valise,—"thar is a poster givin' her performance at Marysville next month." Mr. M'Closky slowly unfolded a large yellow and blue printed poster, profusely illustrated.

"She calls herself 'Mam'selle J. Miglawski,—the great Russian Trapeziste.'"

John Ashe tore it from his hand. "Of course," he said, suddenly facing Mr. M'Closky, "you don't expect me to go on with this?"

Mr. M'Closky picked up the poster, carefully refolded it, and returned it to his valise. "When you break off with Jinny," he said quietly, "I don't want anything said 'bout this. She doesn't know it. She's a woman, and I reckon you're a white man."

"But what am I to say? How am I to go back of my word?"

"Write her a note. Say something hez come to your knowledge—don't say what—that makes you break it off. You needn't be afeard Jinny'll ever ask you what."

John Ashe hesitated. He felt he had been cruelly wronged. No gentleman—no Ashe—could go on further in this affair. It was preposterous to think of it. But somehow he felt at the moment very unlike a gentleman or an Ashe, and was quite sure he should break down under

Jinny's steady eyes. But then—he could write to her.

"So ores is about as light here as on the Ridge. Well, I reckon they'll come up before the rains. Good-night.' Mr. M'Closky took the hand that his host mechanically extended, shook it gravely, and was gone.

When Mr. M'Closky, a week later, stepped again upon his own veranda, he saw through the French window the figure of a man in his parlor. Under his hospitable roof the sight was not unusual, but for an instant a subtle sense of disappointment thrilled him. When he saw it was not the face of Ashe turned toward him he was relieved; but when he saw the tawny beard and quick, passionate eyes of Henry Rance he felt a new sense of apprehension, so that he fell to rubbing his beard almost upon his very threshold.

Jinny ran into the hall, and seized her father with a little cry of joy. "Father," said Jinny, in a hurried whisper, "don't mind *him*"—indicating Rance with a toss of her yellow braids: "he's going soon, and I think, father, I've done him wrong.

But it's all over with John and me now; read that note, and see how he's insulted me." Her lip quivered, but she went on: "It's Ridgeway that he means, father, and I believe it was his hand struck Ridgeway down, or that he knows who did. But hush, now; not a word."

She gave him a feverish kiss, and glided back into the parlor, leaving Mr. M'Closky perplexed and irresolute with the note in his hand. He glanced at it hurriedly and saw that it was couched in almost the very words he had suggested. But a sudden apprehensive recollection came over him; he listened, and with an exclamation of dismay he seized his hat and ran out of the house. But too late; at the same moment a quick, nervous footstep was heard upon the veranda, the French window flew open, and with a light laugh of greeting Ridgeway stepped into the room.

Jinny's finer ear first caught the step, Jinny's swifter feelings had sounded the depths of hope, of joy, of despair before he entered the room. Jinny's pale face was the only one that met his, self-pos-

sessed and self-reliant, when he stood before them. An angry flush suffused even the pink roots of Rance's beard as he rose to his feet; an ominous fire sprang into Ridgeway's eyes, and a spasm of hate and scorn passed over the lower part of his face and left the mouth and jaw immobile and rigid.

Yet he was the first to speak. "I owe you an apology," he said to Jinny, with a suave scorn that brought the indignant blood back to her cheek, "for this intrusion, but I ask no pardon for withdrawing from the only spot where that man dare confront me with safety."

With an exclamation of rage, Rance sprang toward him. But as quickly Jinny stood between them, erect and menacing. "There must be no quarrel here," she said to Rance. "While I protect your right as my guest, don't oblige me to remind you of mine as your hostess." She turned with a half-deprecatory air to Ridgeway, but he was gone. So was her father. Only Rance remained, with a look of ill-concealed triumph on his face.

Without looking at him she passed toward the door. When she reached it she turned. "You asked me a question an hour ago. Come to me in the garden at nine o'clock to-night and I will answer you. But promise me first to keep away from Mr. Dent; give me your word not to seek him—to avoid him if he seeks you. Do you promise? It is well."

He would have taken her hand, but she waved him away. In another moment he heard the swift rustle of her dress in the hall, the sound of her feet upon the stair, the sharp closing of her bedroom door, and all was quiet.

And even thus quietly the day wore away, and the night rose slowly from the valley and overshadowed the mountains with purple wings that fanned the still air into a breeze, until the moon followed it and lulled everything to rest as with the laying on of white and benedictory hands. It was a lovely night, but Henry Rance, waiting impatiently beneath a sycamore at the foot of the garden, saw no beauty in earth or air or sky. A thousand suspicions common to a jeal-

ous nature, a vague superstition of the spot, filled his mind with distrust and doubt. "If this should be a trick to keep my hands off that insolent pup!" he muttered—but even as the thought passed his tongue, a white figure slid from the shrubbery near the house, glided along the line of picket fence, and then stopped, midway, motionless in the moonlight.

It was she. But he scarcely recognized her in the white drapery that covered her head and shoulders and breast. He approached her with a hurried whisper. "Let us withdraw from the moonlight. Everybody can see us here."

"We have nothing to say that cannot be said in the moonlight, Henry Rance," she replied, coldly receding from his proffered hand. She trembled for a moment, as if with a chill, and then suddenly turned upon him: "Hold up your head, and let me look at you! I've known only what men are; let me see what a traitor looks like!"

He recoiled more from her wild face than her words. He saw for the first time that her hollow cheeks and hollow eyes

were blazing with fever. He was no coward, but he would have fled.

"You are ill, Jinny," he said; "you had best return to the house. Another time"—

"Stop!" she cried hoarsely; "move from this spot, and I'll call for help! Attempt to leave me now, and I'll proclaim you the assassin that you are!"

"It was a fair fight," he said doggedly.

"Was it a fair fight to creep behind an unarmed and unsuspecting man? Was it a fair fight to try to throw suspicion on some one else? Was it a fair fight to deceive me? Liar and coward that you are!"

He made a stealthy step toward her with evil eyes, and a wickeder hand that crept within his breast. She saw the motion, but it only stung her to newer fury.

"Strike!" she said, with blazing eyes, throwing her hands open before him. "Strike! Are you afraid of the woman who dares you? or do you keep your knife for the backs of unsuspecting men? Strike! I tell you! No? Look then!" With a sudden movement she tore from her head and shoulders the thick lace

shawl that had concealed her figure and stood before him." Look!" she cried passionately, pointing to the bosom and shoulders of her white dress, darkly streaked with faded stains and ominous discoloration. "Look! This is the dress I wore that morning when I found him lying here—*here*—bleeding from your cowardly knife. Look! Do you see? This .is his blood—my darling boy's blood!—one drop of which, dead and faded as it is, is more precious to me than the whole living pulse of any other man! Look! I come to you to-night christened with his blood and dare you to strike—dare you to strike him again through me and mingle my blood with his! Strike, I implore you! Strike! if you have any pity on me—for God's sake! Strike! if you are a man Look! Here lay his head on my shoulder; here I held him to my breast, where never—so help me, my God!—another man—Ah!"—

She reeled against the fence, and something that had flashed in Rance's hand dropped at her feet; for another flash and report rolled him over in the dust, and

across his writhing body two men strode and caught her ere she fell.

"She has only fainted," said Mr. M'Closky. "Jinny, dear, my girl, speak to me!"

"What is this on her dress?" said Ridgeway, kneeling beside her, and lifting his set and colorless face. At the sound of his voice the color came faintly back to her cheek; she opened her eyes and smiled.

"It's only your blood, dear boy," she said; "but look a little deeper and you'll find my own."

She put up her two yearning hands and drew his face and lips down to her own. When Ridgeway raised his head again her eyes were closed, but her mouth still smiled as with the memory of a kiss.

They bore her to the house, still breathing, but unconscious. That night the road was filled with clattering horsemen, and the summoned skill of the countryside for leagues away gathered at her couch. The wound, they said, was not essentially dangerous, but they had grave fears of the shock to a system that al-

ready seemed suffering from some strange and unaccountable nervous exhaustion. The best medical skill of Tuolumne happened to be young and observing, and waited patiently an opportunity to account for it. He was presently rewarded.

For toward morning she rallied and looked feebly around. Then she beckoned her father toward her, and whispered, "Where is he?"

"They took him away, Jinny dear, in a cart. He won't trouble you again." He stopped, for Miss Jinny had raised herself on her elbow, and leveled her black brows at him. But two kicks from the young surgeon, and a significent motion toward the door, sent Mr. M'Closky away, muttering. "How should I know that *'he'* meant Ridgeway?" he said apologetically, as he went and returned with the young gentleman. The surgeon, who was still holding her pulse, smiled, and thought that with a little care—and attention—the stimulants—might be—diminished—and—he—might leave—the patient for some hours, with perfect

safety. He would give further directions to Mr. M'Closky—downstairs.

It was with great archness of manner that half an hour later Mr. M'Closky entered the room with a preparatory cough, and it was with some disappointment that he found Ridgeway standing quietly by the window, and his daughter apparently fallen into a light doze. He was still more concerned when, after Ridgeway had retired, noticing a pleasant smile playing about her lips, he said softly,—

"You was thinking of some one, Jinny?"

"Yes, father"—the gray eyes met his steadily—"of poor John Ashe!"

Her recovery was swift. Nature, that had seemed to stand jealousy aloof from her in her mental anguish, was kind to the physcial hurt of her favorite child. The superb physique which had been her charm and trial now stood her in good stead. The healing balsam of the pine, the balm of resinous gums, and the rare medicaments of Sierran altitudes touched her, as it might have touched the wounded doe. So that in two weeks she was able

to walk about, and when at the end of the month Ridgeway returned from a flying visit to San Francisco, and jumped from the Wingdam coach at four o'clock in the morning, The Rose of Tuolumne, with the dewy petals of either cheek fresh as when first unfolded to his kiss, confronted him on the road.

With a common instinct their young feet both climbed the little hill now sacred to their thought. When they reached its summit they were both, I think, a little disappointed. There is a fragrance in the unfolding of a passion that escapes the perfect flower. Jinny thought the night was not as beautiful; Ridgeway, that the long ride had blunted his perceptions. They had the frankness to confess it to each other, with the rare delight of such a confession and the comparison of details which they thought each had forgotten. And with this and an occasional pitying reference to the blank period when they had not known each other, hand in hand, they reached the house.

Mr. M'Closky was awaiting them impatiently upon the veranda. When Miss

Jinny had slipped upstairs to replace a collar that stood somewhat suspiciously awry, Mr. M'Closky drew Ridgeway solemnly aside. He held a large theatre poster in one hand, and an open newspaper in the other.

"I allus said," he remarked slowly, with the air of merely renewing a suspended conversation,—"I allus said that riding three hosses to onct wasn't exactly in her line. It would seem that it ain't. From remarks in this *yer* paper. it would appear that she tried it on at Marysville last week and broke her neck.

THE MISSION DOLORES

THE Mission Dolores is destined to be "The Last Sigh" of the native Californian. When the last "Greaser" shall indolently give way to the bustling Yankee, I can imagine he will, like the Moorish King, ascend one of the Mission hills to take his last lingering look at the hilled city. For a long time he will cling tenaciously to Pacific Street. He will delve in the rocky fastnesses of Telegraph Hill until progress shall remove it. He will haunt Vallejo Street, and those back slums which so vividly typify the degradation of a people; but he will eventually make way for improvement. The Mission will be last to drop from his nerveless fingers.

As I stand here this pleasant afternoon, looking up at the old chapel,—its ragged senility contrasting with the smart spring sunshine, its two gouty pillars with the plaster dropping away like tattered bandages, its rayless windows, its crum-

bling entrances, the leper spots on its whitewashed wall eating through the dark adobe,—I give the poor old mendicant but a few years longer to sit by the highway and ask alms in the names of the blessed saints. Already the vicinity is haunted with the shadow of its dissolution. The shriek of the locomotive discords with the Angelus bell. An Episcopal church, of a green Gothic type, with massive buttresses of Oregon pine, even now mocks its hoary age with imitation and supplants it with a sham. Vain, alas! were those rural accessories, the nurseries and market-gardens, that once gathered about its walls and resisted civic encroachment. They, too, are passing away. Even those queer little adobe buildings with tiled roofs like longitudinal slips of cinnamon, and walled enclosures sacredly guarding a few bullock horns and strips of hide. I look in vain for the half-reclaimed Mexican, whose respectability stopped at his waist, and whose red sash under his vest was the utter undoing of his black broadcloth. I miss, too, those black-haired women, with swaying un-

stable busts, whose dresses were always unseasonable in texture and pattern; whose wearing of a shawl was a terrible awakening from the poetic dream of the Spanish mantilla. Traces of another nationality are visible. The railroad "navvy" has builded his shanty near the chapel and smokes his pipe in the Posada. Gutturals have taken the place of linguals and sibilants; I miss the half-chanted, half-drawled cadences that used to mingle with the cheery "All aboard" of the stage-driver, in those good old days when the stages ran hourly to the Mission, and a trip thither was an excursion. At the very gates of the temple, in the place of those "who sell doves for sacrifice," a vender of mechanical spiders has halted with his unhallowed wares. Even the old Padre—last type of the Missionary, and descendant of the good Junipero—I cannot find to-day; in his stead a light-haired Celt is reading a lesson from a Vulgate that is wonderfully replete with double r's. Gentle priest, in thy Risons, let the stranger and heretic be remembered.

I open a little gate and enter the

Mission Churchyard. There is no change here, though perhaps the graves lie closer together. A willow-tree, growing beside the deep, brown wall, has burst into tufted plumes in the fulness of spring. The tall grass-blades over each mound show a strange quickening of the soil below. It is pleasanter here than on the bleak mountain seaward where distracting winds continually bring the strife and turmoil of the ocean. The Mission hills lovingly embrace the little cemetery, whose decorative taste is less ostentatious. The foreign flavor is strong; here are never-failing garlands of *immortelles,* with their sepulchral spicery; here are little cheap medallions of pewter, with the adornment of three black tears, that would look like the three of clubs, but that the simple humility of the inscription counterbalances all sense of the ridiculous. Here are children's graves with guardian angels of great specific gravity; but here, too, are the little one's toys in a glass case beside them. Here is the average quantity of execrable original verses; but one stanza—over a sailor's grave—is striking,

for it expresses a hope of salvation through the "Lord High Admiral Christ"! Over the foreign graves there is a notable lack of scriptural quotation, and an increase, if I may say it, of humanity and tenderness. I cannot help thinking that too many of my countrymen are influenced by a morbid desire to make a practical point of this occasion, and are too hastily to crowd a whole life of omission into the culminating act. But when I see the gray *immortelles* crowning a tombstone, I know I shall find the mysteries of the resurrection shown rather in symbols, and only the love taught in His new commandment left for the graphic touch. But "they manage these things better in France."

During my purposeless ramble the sun has been steadily climbing the brown wall of the church, and the air seems to grow cold and raw. The bright green dies out of the grass, and the rich bronze comes down from the wall. The willow-tree seems half inclined to doff its plumes, and wears the dejected air of a broken

faith and violated trust. The spice of the *immortelles* mixes with the incense that steals through the open window. Within, the barbaric gilt and crimson look cold and cheap in this searching air; by this light the church certainly is old and ugly. I cannot help wondering whether the old Fathers, if they ever revisit the scene of their former labors, in their larger comprehensions, view with regret the impending change, or mourn over the day when the Mission Dolores shall appropriately come to grief.

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